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# The MCA Advisory

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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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**August 8-12, 2007--ANA Convention in Milwaukee**

**August 9, 2007--MCA meeting in Milwaukee at 3:00 p.m. Room 102**

## From the Editor

We are just returning from a delightful trip down the Elbe River. Stops at Dresden, Wittenburg and elsewhere permitted viewing of unimaginable treasures. The altar piece in Luther's church, the old masters in Dresden's Zwinger galleries and the fabled jewels of Augustus III are all faithfully custodied. More important, they are made available to hundreds of thousands of visitors who can imbibe the rich lessons of history. All of these treasures are owned by the state and the state discharges its responsibility for stewardship in an exemplary fashion.

On an earlier visit to London we were privileged to spend several hours viewing medals in the British Museum. The scope of the Museum's collections and the quality of its personnel are excelled by none. However, sad to say, the condition of some of the bronze medals that we viewed was deteriorating. These medals were not particularly valuable and, given a finite museum staff, the priorities lay elsewhere. Even so, it is a pity that any historical medal should be succumbing to time.

The problem is only partly explained by the lack of staff. Over the years, we have sensed a bias against applying conservation techniques on the part of most institutions possessing numismatic collections. Just as most libraries do little to preserve their leather findings, so too is conservation of numismatic items characterized by inertia.

We suspect that the whole issue is one of simple economics. Priceless national treasures are preserved for the ages. Lesser properties must take their chances. If one is a tax payer, one cannot quarrel with this approach. However, if one is a numismatist, one wants to do better. The solution, perhaps, is to build bridges between museums and the collector community, with the latter offering to do classification and conservation of second tier material. Yes, the curators and conservators are unlikely to be receptive to

"amateur" assistance but the idea has a certain logic to it that strikes us as inevitable. We will report on our efforts along these lines and hope others will do likewise.

## A Book Review (by Sam Pennington)

Comitia Americana and Related Medals: Underappreciated Monuments to Our Heritage by John W. Adams and Anne E. Bentley (George Frederick Kolbe Publications, 2007, 304 pp., hardbound, \$135.00 from George Frederick Kolbe Publications, PO Drawer 3100, Crestline, CA 92325-3100; ([www.numislit.com](http://www.numislit.com)); (909) 338-6527; include \$10 S/H in U.S., \$25 S/H elsewhere).

Although written primarily for the advanced collector of American medals, Comitia Americana is a rare combination of art, mechanics, and history that should appeal even to those who do not collect medals. Comitia Americana is Latin for "American Congress," and this book covers the medals authorized by--Congress for Revolutionary War heroes--among them George Washington, John Eager Howard, Nathanael Greene, John Paul Jones, and several others.

Congress had to go to France to have the medals designed and struck. The ubiquitous Benjamin Franklin figures prominently, first with several medals depicting Ben Franklin and then as the instigator and chief dispenser of the *Libertas Americana* medals, which celebrated American independence and were distributed to all manner of influential and helpful people.

The authors have done a fantastic research job tracking down all the particulars of how the medals were ordered and made, and where the surviving medals are located now. As a lagniappe, they contracted to have all the pictures of the medals and drawings produced utilizing a technology called stochastic screening. It's essentially a random dot process that produces, as they say in the press release, "superbly detailed illustrations that allow for enlargement of detail under magnification,

producing much the same result as actual photographs."

The price is steep at \$135 plus \$10 shipping, but that will probably turn out to be a good investment. According to the publisher, they have only bound 600 copies and have printed sheets for another 200. When those are sold out, the price will surely escalate on the rare book market.

**Sam Pennington, Publisher *Maine Antique Digest* (207) 832-6276**

## **Berlin Feast** (by John W. Adams)

On a recent trip to Germany, we were privileged to see the Munzkabinett in Berlin. With 500,000 coins and medals—150,000 of which are ancient—theirs is truly a major collection.

Four rooms of coins and medals are on public display. These pieces are immaculately conserved, as one might expect, but so too are the pieces in their huge vault. Everything is meticulously catalogued and arranged in clever metal trays which, in turn, fit into banks that are six feet high and perhaps 15 feet wide. These banks stretch for perhaps two hundred feet with ample space between them. The impression is one of order and cleanliness. The hospitality of Dr. Steguweit, the assistant director, was impeccable.

The four public display rooms contained gems beyond number. The Germans holdings are featured with items from medieval times through the first empire, the second empire and on to modern times. A 92mm gold medal of Wadislaus IV of Poland caught my eye as did a half dozen other exquisite medals by Sebastian Dadler. Silver from the principality of Brandenburg-Luneburg included a 10 tater piece (1574) and a 16 taler piece (1588). Not least was a copious display of dies formerly belonging to Becker the forger.

The quality and variety of renaissance medals was overwhelming. We counted seven originals by Pisano with de Pasti, Werner, Faltz, Hedlinger and Dupré (Gulliame) all being well represented. Working back to the ancients, there were dekadrachims from Syracuse and Athens. There was a 9 solidi (in gold) of the Emperor Constantine I and two massive gold medals the occasions for which now escape our memory. Naturally, there were long runs of "ordinary" coinage in all metals.

There was little that fit our collecting interests, the exception being a well-preserved *Libertas Americana* in silver. The Munzkabinett displays are but a tiny part of the vast collections of the Bode Museum located on the northern tip of Museum Island.

## **Princeton's Henry Lee Revolutionary War Medal Revisited** (by Chris Eimer)

In the course of reviewing the new book on *Comitia Americana and related Medals*, by John W. Adams and Anne E. Bentley,<sup>1</sup> I had reason to revisit an article by Dr Alan Stahl in *The MCA* of December 2005, concerning the engraved 1775-1783 Henry Lee medal in the collection of Princeton University.<sup>2</sup>

On looking at an illustration of the medal at the time when that article first appeared, I was struck by how uncharacteristically eighteenth century it appeared to be, and indeed Dr Stahl, Curator of numismatic collections at Princeton, called into question its age and discussed its provenance. In so doing, he seems to have partially resolved those issues in favour of an eighteenth century pedigree. At that time, I had neither handled nor even set eyes on the medal in the flesh, and

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<sup>1</sup> Review of *Comitia Americana* to be published in *The Asylum*, Volume 25, No. 2, Spring 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The MCA Advisory, December 2005, Volume 8, Number 12, pp. 9-12.

while that has not changed, in looking at the illustration of the medal once again, I do think that there are a number of characteristics that raise questions as to when exactly it was made.

Generally speaking, the study of engraved medals from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century is something of a minefield, and they do require a degree of circumspection. In comparing the Henry Lee medal with others known to have been engraved in the eighteenth century, the form of lettering has a freshness and modernity, perhaps best described as strident or confident, that appears to be out of step with its period, and certainly not in keeping with the lettering found on other contemporary medals.

This is evident from the formation of the ovals that constitutes the letters 'g', 'd' and 'p' in 'Washington' and 'Independence'; and with further regard to the 'p', the continuing upright seems to be an anachronism. The use of the 'f' for the letter 's', in both 'Washington' and 'Patriotism', is a convention not usually seen in medals from this period, nor indeed is the type of ampersand separating 'Washington' and 'Independence'. Admittedly, this is an area of speciality of its own, and I must declare no particular expertise in the field, other than as an observer of medals, coincidental to which is their typography.

Going beyond the lettering to the frame of the medal, the raised decorated or floreated border is again uncharacteristic of eighteenth-century medals, but it is something usually, and quite commonly, found on mid-nineteenth-century silver hand-engraved school and prize medals, particular those by Scottish makers.<sup>3</sup> An example of a medal displaying engraving and a border which can be confidently placed within its inscribed date of 1783 is the Royal Institution medal awarded to Benjamin

Franklin, which was in a recent Stack's auction.<sup>4</sup>

The provenance for Princeton's Henry Lee medal, as outlined by Dr Stahl, only goes back with any degree of certainty to the sale held by Thomas L. Elder on 25 January 1935, where, as Lot 771, it was purchased for the not inconsiderable sum of \$100, either by the Friends of Princeton University Library, or through a dealer bidding on the university's behalf. The auction catalogue states that the medal had been in a 'very old American family for many years and came from the South'. No documentation relating to the medal's manufacture and award has been found, which is not in itself surprising, for, lamentably, relatively little manuscript evidence relating to eighteenth-century medals survives. Dr Stahl suggests that a likely explanation for its appearance on the numismatic market are the financial circumstances in which Lee found himself in 1810, obliging him to sell all of his possessions. If this is indeed the background against which the medal came onto the market, there appears to be no evidential or accountable history for it in the subsequent 125 years, other than the sketchy provenance provided in the Elder catalogue. Again, such things are not surprising, for the most remarkable of medals do, so to speak, occasionally drop out of the sky from nowhere; but never the less, this complete lack of provenance cannot be ignored entirely.

Dr Stahl admits to some degree of scepticism in regard to the question of authenticity, pending further research. But for the moment at least, he appears to have been swayed by the price that the medal commanded at the Elder auction, whatever the particular ins and outs of its sale at this time. The Princeton Friends of the Library had the medal suspended by a looped orange and black ribbon and an attached bar, with no pretence to the eighteenth century. The attachment of this accoutrement to

<sup>3</sup> See for example Dix Noonan Webb (DNW) Auction, London, 3 June 1999, cf. 389-476.

<sup>4</sup> Stack's Auction, New York, 23 May 2006, J.J. Ford Jr. Collection, Part XIV, Lot 366.

an eighteenth-century medal might have been considered sacrilegious and inadvisable, but, most surprisingly the two look entirely concordant with each other.

If the medal was not produced in the 1780s, one has to then consider when might it have been made, and the circumstances which advocated or encouraged its manufacture, without necessarily any intention to deceive. One possible answer might lie in the Independence celebrations of 1876 and subsequent publication in 1878 of Loubat's work on the medallic history of the United States.<sup>5</sup> As will have been clear from Loubat, and for the first time to many, only one of the planned *Comitia Americana* medals did not come to fruition in its planned form, this being that for Henry Lee.

Independent of each other, the issues regarding Princeton's Henry Lee medal may not amount to very much, but, collectively, they do appear to create the grounds for debate, regarding the circumstances of its making.

## A Meeting with Glode Requa

(By Spencer Peck)

Glode and I finally got together on Friday, March 30th. Glode is descended of a family with roots in Westchester County that date back to 1635 while his great grandfather was a Captain in the Westchester County, NY militia during the Revolutionary War. Glode himself, while now semi retired, was for many years after World War II, one of the leading importers of Revolutionary War era arms and militaria in the United States. His collection of these items remains significant.

Collectors of coins, arms and militaria seem to go hand in hand, probably because of the common link of historical connection. In any event, Glode began acquiring coins in the

<sup>5</sup> The Asylum, Winter 2007, Volume 25, No. 1, John W. Adams, review of J.F. Loubat's *Medallic History*, pp. 15-20.

60's and 70's when gold was trading at \$35.00 per ounce. Remember those days? Because of his timing, he put away a significant collection of colonial and United States coins and medals at what are, compared to today's prices, absolutely bargain basement prices. His collection was recently auctioned off in the September 2, 2006 ANR Glode M. Requa Sale in New York City as well as the November 7-8, 2006 Stack's Norweb Collection Sale in Baltimore.

The Requa collection of Admiral Vernon Medals numbered some 104 pieces in generally extra fine or better condition. It greatly exceeded the LaRiviere Collection, which had only seventeen examples and Ford, which had fifty-seven. When asked what caused him to collect these, his reply was simply: "I found them to be interesting." The reference used by Glode to organize his collection was McCormick-Goodhart (1945: 241 varieties), which while far from definitive, is a vast improvement over Betts (1894: 167 varieties).

An interesting gentleman, who has led an interesting life. I only wish I had known him sooner as we got along famously.

## Cast Metal Shrinkage-SECRET Test for Cast Medals

(by D. WAYNE JOHNSON) Copyright © 2007

AT THE REQUEST of Joe Levine, who read my article on struck versus cast in last month's MCA Advisory,

I will reveal the secret of the ages (at least for medal collectors): How to test for genuine cast originals from later cast copies.

The answer lies with the property of metal – ***it shrinks when it cools!***

Once you can tell the difference between cast and struck you may wish to know how to tell the difference between two cast medals. Which one came first or which one could be the original.

This is particularly important for Renaissance medals because of their inherent rarity and the fact they were copied so indiscriminately. It is so easy to make a mold from a cast medal and then make a cast from that mold.

As these copies became distributed they, in turn, served as the pattern. A mold was made of these, then a new copy from that new mold. Each of these is called a **generation**. Father, son, and Holy Cow, this could go on forever!

Each succeeding generation gets ever so smaller. Also there is a loss of detail with each new casting. The detail in each succeeding generation becomes less distinct, probably because of **meniscus**. Remember meniscus from last month?

Molten cast metal cannot flow into the crevices and corners. Sharp edges look even more rounded and less distinct when cast.

But the width of the **image** gives up the secret. Note I said *image*, not the diameter of the medal. Even those who cast medals in Renaissance times knew the medal image was shrinking.

So they solved that – or continued to perpetrate the subterfuge – by adding a small **flange** around the edge. That was easy to do when casting a new medal. It could make a second generation cast as wide, or wider, as the previous.

I have seen early medals (**aftercasts**) with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch flange. So you cannot measure from one edge of the medal to the opposite edge.

*You must measure from edge of the image, across the medal, to the opposite edge of the image.*

Then measure a known specimen the same way and compare these two figures. The larger is a prior generation.

Granted this is more difficult when the medal has no rim or border. You could pick two similar points on the design of two medals. Remember this maxim:

***The medal shrinks uniformly if it is the same metal.*** Metal with a “T.”

A bronze medal shrinks the same as another bronze medal. Bronze shrinks different from tin or aluminum, or, lead or zinc. Bronze shrinks about the same amount as copper, brass or nickel. See the chart on the next page.

Foundry workers who work with this all the time (in much larger sizes, of course) use a rule of thumb of 3/16-inch shrinkage per linear foot – or 1.56% – for copper, bronze or thin brass.

Thicker castings shrink somewhat less than thinner castings. Since cast medals are among thinner castings their shrinkage tends toward the high degree of shrinkage.

However, numismatists can round off this figure somewhat. For a rule of thumb remember medals shrink halfway between one and two percent (if you don't want to remember 1.56 percent).

Now you must remember one more important thing. If the mold was made of medal, it will shrink, make a cast from that mold and it will shrink.

Thus a numismatic cast may exhibit the cumulative shrinkage of both mold and cast – or 3.12%. Round off that in your mind at 3 percent, if you wish.

The chart below is what professional foundry workers use. Since most cast medals are bronze this is highlighted.

Casting Metal	Shrinkage	
	Per Foot	Percent
Pure tin	1/32-inch	0.26%
Cast iron		
Malleable iron	1/8-inch	1.04%
Britannia Metal	11/64-inch	1.43%
Copper, bronze thin brass or nickel casting alloys	3/16-inch	1.56%
Pure aluminum	13/64-inch	1.69%
Zinc, lead	5/16-inch	2.60 inc

## The Ashtray Medal

(by Samuel Pennington)

A little-known category in the medals collecting field is the ashtray medal. Ranging from 3½" in diameter up to 8", they look like oversized art medals. They are now sometimes called "deep dishes" because smoking is so out of fashion.

While a number of decorative, commemorative, and advertising ashtrays have been produced, our discussion here is limited to ashtrays made and signed by recognized sculptors and medalists.

The most prolific maker of ashtrays we have found is the very prominent American sculptor Paul Howard Manship (1885-1966). At least 20 Manship ashtray medals have been identified so far. I have confirmed two other American sculptors who have done ashtrays: Sidney B. Waugh (1904-1964) and Chester Beach (1881-1956). Collector Dr. Marvin Reingold sent me a list of medalists in his collection which included four more ashtray medal makers (which I have not confirmed): Edward Hurley (1869-1950), R. Garret Thew (1892-1964, Mrs. Baidzar Arootian (1899-1985), and Oscar J. W. Hansen (1892-1971). There are assuredly more, but I have not found them yet.

Writing about Manship's ashtrays in the catalog for the 2001 *Art for Art's Sake* exhibition held at the Cornish Colony Museum in Windsor, Vermont, Robert Mueller noted, "These small dishes are among the most deftly modeled and beautiful works by Manship and are today highly sought after by collectors. Mostly they were created for the sheer joy of sculpting, given as coveted gifts to friends on special occasions, but there were also two commissioned works of this type. Due to the fame of the artist and the extremely limited number of pieces produced I seriously doubt that many were used for their original purpose except by the artist and his family."

Manship's first commissioned ashtray was a small (3½") piece illustrating the goddess Diana the Huntress, done for presentation to the lay members of the National Sculpture Society. Mueller called it "a gem in bronze," noting that it became the first of a series illustrating mythological subjects. "Looking at the Diana ashtray, the viewer is first taken by the great illusion of motion and speed of the figures. Diana with her bow literally flies through the surrounding flora, her swiftness easily matches the speeding hound below her. The foliage gives way to the envelope created before her while the plants behind are drawn in her wake. Her figure is freely sculpted and extremely fluid in form, her long hair flowing in serpentine waves on both sides of her head. The style of the figure itself is reminiscent of early Minoan frescoes and everything about it insinuates action."

The next commissioned ashtray was done in 1927 for the Carnegie Corporation as a reward for individual effort. Pegasus, the winged mythological horse, is the central figure surrounded by the motto: "CARNEGIE CORPORATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING." A panel at the base carries the name of the award winner.

The Diana ashtray was produced by the preeminent sculpture foundry, the Roman Bronze Works of New York. All of Manship's other ashtrays were produced by the leading medals producer, the Medallic Arts Company (MACO) of New York and later Connecticut.

According to D. Wayne Johnson, cataloger and publicity spokesman for MACO, Manship's ashtrays were made by electroforming in pure copper. "The craftsmen in MACO's plant who made these were Mike Kowaski prior to 1950 and Hugo Greco after 1950. Mike is dead, but Hugo is very much alive. None were made after 1972 when ownership of the company changed and the

firm moved to Danbury [and ultimately Nevada].

“Hugo remembers these well. He would give them an antique copper finish and place a black felt circle on the base of every one. He reports that he has never seen the full set of twelve at one time. He would receive orders for only one or two at a time for specific zodiac designs.” Johnson added in a phone interview that when MACO had a showroom in New York, ashtrays were the most stolen item. He also said that the 1952 medal made for Sidney Waugh commemorating Western Maryland Railroad’s centennial was cast rather than electroformed.

Most of Manship’s ashtrays were of mythological subjects. There were three versions of Europa and the Bull, also titled Flight of Europa (1917, 1919, and 1946), one of Sagittarius (also called Centaur or Chiron) in 1919 and in 1946, and 12 ashtrays that Manship scholar Robert Mueller called “his crowning series which covers the full complement of the Zodiac. Each of these works captures the essence of its particular sign.” Mueller also noted, “A series of drawn studies in the Minneapolis Museum of Art in St. Paul, Minnesota, shows how Manship worked out many of the designs.”

Given the scarcity of ashtray medals, prices have remained astonishingly low. Perhaps it is because many collectors have been unaware they existed. In December 2006 Dawson & Nye Auctioneers in Morris Plains, New Jersey, sold Manship’s 1937 Eros and Psyche for a low \$118. In June 2004 the author paid \$1440 at Swann Galleries in New York City for an Eros and Psyche. Top auction price we found for a Manship was \$1880 at Skinner in September 2004 for a Capricorn, from the 1946 Zodiac series.

The Chester Beach 1925 ashtray sold on eBay for \$850, and the 1952 Sidney Waugh ashtray was purchased privately from Presidential Coin & Antique Company for \$195. Five Zodiac Manships were purchased

privately from Richard Halpern of Heritage Auctions for \$1300 each in 2005.

In the exhibit *Paul Manship and His Circle*, which closed in December 2006, the Gerald Peters Gallery in New York City offered a 7-inch Manship Aquarius from the Zodiac series for \$6000.

There aren’t any fakes out there yet, but there are some “wannabees.” A bronze the author hoped might be an unsigned or overlooked example by Paul Manship was purchased on iGavel for \$250. “Close, but no cigar, just another European erotic bronze,” said the expert.

Whether you smoke or not (and I hope you don’t), ashtray medals are worth smoking out.

### Known Ashtray Medals and Their Dates

(List courtesy Robert Mueller. If you know of more ashtray medals not listed here, please e-mail samp@maineantiquedigest.com or write Sam Pennington, c/o Maine Antique Digest, PO Box 1429, Waldoboro, ME 04572)

#### By Paul Manship

Diana (commissioned by the National Sculpture Society) – 1915

Flight of Europa I – 1917

Sagittarius (Centaur or Chiron) – 1919

Flight of Europa II – 1919

Pegasus (commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation) – 1927

Pegasus above rocks with bottom “plaque” only and no lettering – 1927

Dionysus (head only) – 1930

Dionysus (with the full obverse of the Society of Medalists medal # 2) – 1930

Eros and Psyche – 1937

Aquarius (for Frances Grimes’s 70th birthday, possibly unique) – 1939

Taurus - 1941 (the later version is very similar to this)

Scorpio in terra cotta - 1942 (the later version is very similar to this)

Flight of Europa III – 1946

**Manship's Zodiac Series (12 medals) – 1946**

Aries	The Ram
Taurus	The Bull
Gemini	The Twins
Cancer	The Crab
Leo	The Lion
Virgo	The Virgin
Libra	The Scales
Scorpio	The Scorpion
Sagittarius	The Archer
Capricorn	The Sea-goat
Aquarius	The Water Carrier
Pisces	The Fishes

**By Chester Beach**

Sydney Zac at Lake – 1925

**By Edward Hurley**

Lizards  
Spider

**By R. Garret Thew**

Mermaid

**By Oscar J.W. Hansen**

Butterfly/leaf

**By Mrs. Baidzar Arootian**

Nude Female (ceramic)

**By Sidney Waugh**

Western Maryland Railroad Centennial – 1952



Diana (commissioned by the National Sculpture Society), Paul Manship, 1915.



Western Maryland Railroad Centennial, by Sidney Waugh, 1952.



Sagittarius (Centaur or Chiron), by Paul Manship, 1919.